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T00975A003700130001-6

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15 May 1958

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Copy No. 140

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN



DOCUMENT NO. 13
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. X
11 DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C
NEXT REVIEW DATE: 2010
AUTH: MR. C
DATE: 3/26/80 REVIEWER:

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State Dept. review completed

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Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

15 May 1958

25X1

DAILY BRIEF

I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

yes

Poland: Warsaw's latest response to Soviet pressure in the bloc dispute with Yugoslavia is a Trybuna Luda editorial condemning some aspects of Tito's party program but treating Yugoslavia as a "fraternal socialist state." Gomulka's position creates a dilemma for the Kremlin. Further Soviet pressure on Poland could threaten the principles of independence on which the continued tenure of Gomulka depends.

[redacted]

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II. ASIA-AFRICA

No

Lebanon: Sporadic street fighting and sabotage have continued. The army has apparently maintained control of most of Beirut, but has not tried to reassert authority in rural areas. Opposition groups continue to receive money and arms from UAR sources. Chamoun's opponents may well mount a new effort against the strained security forces if the results of recent political maneuvering do not satisfy them.

[redacted]

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yes

Burma: Premier U Nu has gained the support of the Communist-dominated National Unity Front in the struggle between Burmese political factions. This will enhance U Nu's prospects for retaining control of the government, but may make him dependent on the front's support. [redacted]

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[redacted] Laos: Communist strategy in Laos appears aimed at keeping the present premier and his cabinet, which includes two former Pathet Lao leaders, in power rather than demanding a larger cabinet representation for leftist parties. The Communists would thus hope to allay conservative fears and prevent the development of conservative unity. This plan may be succeeding since a number of conservative leaders and the French ambassador are already favoring it. [redacted]

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no

Tunisia: The Tunisian foreign secretary has informed the American chargé d'affaires that the government feared French troops might attempt to join forces with those in Algeria, in which case Tunisia would resist the move and hope for American support. [redacted]

yes

Algeria: General Massu and his "committee of public safety" are apparently in control of the city of Algiers and have succeeded in inspiring the formation of similar committees in several other important Algerian cities such as Oran and Constantine. The role of General Salan, which remains

25X1

15 May 68

DAILY BRIEF

ii

25X1

a major factor in determining the effectiveness of any government move, is still unclear. All action is still being taken in the name of preserving Algeria for France, and the movement's ultimate objective still seems to be to influence political developments in Paris. [redacted]

25X1

III. THE WEST

No

*France: (As of 2400 hours) The Pflimlin government, which has been strengthened by the decision of the Socialists to participate, appears to be tightening police control on all political activity. Whether these measures will be effective is still questionable, and there are doubts whether the government will be able to survive in the face of continuing pressure from extremists on the right and defiance by the Communists. A new crisis would advance the prospect of President Coty's calling on De Gaulle to head off a complete disruption of authority in Paris. [redacted]

(Page 9)

No

*Bolivia: The rebel outbreak on 14 May in the Santa Cruz province in eastern Bolivia and the government's subsequent declaration of modified martial law throughout the country will increase the political difficulties of the Siles regime. The government party, which is preparing for a convention on 20 May and for congressional elections in late June, is badly divided. Former President Paz Estenssoro's return from abroad on 14 May is also likely to increase unrest since Paz is friendly with leftist labor leader Juan Lechin. Lechin, a leading critic of the US-backed economic stabilization program, has led the opposition to President Siles in recent months. [redacted]

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I. THE COMMUNIST BLOC

Gomulka Enters Bloc Polemics on Yugoslavia

In response to continued bloc pressure to depart from his middle-of-the-road policy on Yugoslavia, Polish leader Gomulka on 14 May condemned certain aspects of Tito's party program, but in a significantly milder tone than used in other bloc criticisms. The Polish statement, published in the party daily Trybuna Ludu, implies that while there are ideological errors in the Yugoslav program, they do not constitute sufficient cause for reading Yugoslavia out of the socialist camp. The Poles express hope that an ideological and political reconciliation can be reached between the Yugoslavs and the other Communist parties, and state that there must be no return to "the errors and methods of 1948."

Omitting reference to denunciations issued by Moscow and Peiping, which were reprinted without comment by Trybuna Ludu on 10 May, the Poles take particular exception to Tito's analysis that contemporary capitalism is progressing toward socialism by evolutionary means. The Yugoslavs are also condemned for failing to take into account "the fundamental principle of international solidarity of all socialist forces," a criticism which may be directed as much against a continuation of strong polemics by both Moscow and Belgrade as against the program itself.

In taking the Yugoslavs to task for causing ideological confusion in Communist ranks, Gomulka reveals his fear that any split in the socialist camp could point up differences between his program and that of Moscow. The statement avoids comment on those aspects of the Yugoslav program which could have a bearing on Polish internal independence, such as the principles of sovereignty and noninterference in internal affairs which have been major planks in Gomulka's program.

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Next 5 Page(s) In Document Exempt

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Burmese Political Crisis Deepens

Premier Nu has been promised the 46 to 49 parliamentary votes controlled by the Communist-dominated National Unity Front (NUF) in the dispute which has split Burma's governing party, the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League. Nu claims to have made no concessions for this support, but, if he is forced to rely on the NUF votes, he may have to modify his opposition to direct negotiations with the Communist insurgents and to become more accommodating to other leftist demands. Already the Rangoon press has denounced Nu's acceptance as "expediency" and a windfall for the Burmese Communist party, and predicts it will result in the "birth of real Communist power in Burma."

The closeness of the coming parliamentary vote is illustrated by the fact that both the Nu and the Ba Swe - Kyaw Nyein factions are offering the Ministry of Finance to an ethnic minority leader in return for the six votes he can deliver. This leader, however, has announced he will cast his votes "for the winning side."

Both factions have disavowed any intention of resorting to violence, but such a development cannot be discounted in the light of Burma's turbulent history. In the present situation, the feuding leaders command personal followings in the armed forces, regular and irregular, as well as among the police, labor unions, and peasant organizations.

Army Commander in Chief Ne Win has ordered army leaders to remain aloof from the political struggle, [redacted]

[redacted] a dusk-to-dawn curfew will be imposed in the Rangoon area from 26 May until the end of the special session of Parliament which begins on 5 June. Ne Win has warned that the inclusion of Communists in any forthcoming government would be a "matter of concern to the army."

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Sentiment for Coalition With Communists Growing in Laos

Sentiment for the retention of Premier Souvanna Phouma and most of his present cabinet, including two former Pathet Lao representatives, appears to be gaining strength in Laotian political circles. The Communists are abetting this trend to maintain the conservatives' false sense of security, thus facilitating Communist plans for an eventual political take-over. Conservative elements, meanwhile, are seizing on this formula as a face-saving device in the wake of their recent electoral defeat.

Crown Prince Savang has issued a call for national harmony, and has indicated that the monarchy would acquiesce in Souvanna's remaining as head of a coalition government. Other conservative leaders, in turn, are rationalizing the heavy vote for antiadministration candidates in the 4 May election as a protest against government corruption or as a popular mandate for national unity rather than a vote for Communism.

French Ambassador Gassouin, who also favors retention of Souvanna at the head of a government of technicians drawn from all political affiliations, has reiterated his conviction that the Neo Lao Hak Zat is not Communist but a reform party with high motives. His views are encouraging accommodation with the Communists by government officials who, in any event, are inclined to view them essentially as patriots.

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Situation in Algeria

Joint military-civilian committees of "public safety" modeled upon and supporting the one established in Algiers on 13 May under the leadership of French paratroop general Massu and local civilian extremists have apparently assumed power in numerous major and minor Algerian cities--including Oran, Constantine, Bone and Philippeville. These developments have been accompanied by strikes, demonstrations, and new disorders which were most intense in Oran. Rioting mobs there stormed the government building and manhandled the top civilian official after the radio station had been seized, apparently by reservists in civilian dress. The newly established committees have all re-echoed the call for a De Gaulle government issued by Massu and his Algiers committee.

The position of General Salan, France's supreme commander in Algeria, remains unclear. He has been recognized as the ultimate authority in Algeria for the time being by both Premier Pflimlin and General Massu--who yesterday described Salan as an "emanation of the government." Salan himself, who earlier announced he had assumed power "in agreement" with the Algiers committee, has so far studiously avoided a firm public commitment of loyalty to Paris.

Both Salan and the Algiers committee under Massu continue to occupy the paratroop-guarded central government building in Algiers ransacked by European rioters on 13 May. The committee insists, however, that it has no intention of forming an independent government, but intends to hand over authority as soon as Paris installs a government "capable of preserving Algeria as an integral part of France." Late yesterday there were some indications that Massu might now be willing to settle for something considerably short of the terms he first laid down. Events in Algeria, however, indicated that the civilian extremists, now thoroughly aroused, may foment new disorders in an effort to bring down even the Pflimlin government, even if it is further modified.

The French Political Situation (As of 2400 hours)

Premier Pflimlin is attempting to stabilize the situation in France by tightening police controls, arresting rightist extremists, and banning political demonstrations.

The Socialists have agreed to participate in his government, which may lead to the return of Robert Lacoste to Algiers as minister for Algeria. This development might appease the army leaders in Algeria and restore their confidence in the Paris regime.

The other nonextremist French political parties and groups, such as the non-Communist labor organizations, now appear ready to back, at least for a limited time, "common action of all national parties against all seditious activities." Under these circumstances, the Communists may continue agitation similar to the 14 May street demonstrations in an effort to keep alive the idea of a popular front against what they call the new "fascist menace."

Pflimlin faces the prospect of continuing civil disorders and pressures from the military.

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Should continuing extremist agitation force Pflimlin to give up his attempt to maintain a government, President Coty will be under even heavier pressure to turn to De Gaulle. The general, however, has not yet given any sign of his intentions, although various spokesmen continue to make representations on his behalf.

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[Redacted]

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